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Students test fuel efficient super cars

Winning vehicles get thousands of miles per gallon

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INDIANAPOLIS (WISH) - As GM and Chrysler struggle to stay afloat, the technology for the cars of the future may have been tested Monday at O'Reilly Raceway Park, and it was high school students getting a thousand or more miles per gallon.

No two cars on the O'Reilly Raceway Park track looked alike, but each was engineered with the same goal in mind. They were there to get more miles to the gallon than their competitors.

"Last year we achieved 2,843 miles to the gallon" said Andrew Ritter, captain of the twelve member team from Mater Dei Catholic High School in Evansville.

Ritter's team was considered the team to beat. The last three years, Mater Dei has won at least one of three events in the Indiana Mathematics, Science and Technology Education Alliance Super Mileage Challenge. The team just returned from California where it won an event in the national Shell Oil Eco Marathon.

"We're trying to develop technologies here that one day you may see in the future" Ritter said.

Thirty-nine Indiana high schools competed in three categories. Students were required to build the cars from the bottom up. Identical Briggs and Stratton engines were furnished but every other piece or part had to be purchased or donated by a sponsor.

Ritter says his team worked for three months to design the car. He says the secret to his team's success is the aerodynamic air foil shape. "Everything is really light. As you can see, we use, here we have plastic. I can just poke the side in."

IMSTEA president James Thompson says the competition brings two very different groups of kids together from each school; those with great scientific minds, and those with great mechanical hands.

"They need each other," Thompson said.

The teams cheer as their cars take their laps, but it's hard to know whose winning since speed means nothing. In the end, it's the car with the most fuel left in its tiny tank that wins.

For the fourth year in a row, Mater Dei won an event. It won the unlimited category getting an average of 1,293.09 miles per gallon.

The team from Greenfield Central won the stock class, getting 1,048.79 miles per gallon.

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